

Improving the pig industry *to enable small producers* to meet consumer expectations *in Vietnam and Cambodia*

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Pigmeat accounts for two thirds of all meat consumed in Asia. In Vietnam and Cambodia, consumers are buying more and more meat, but there is increasing demand for quality meats. In those countries, where pig farming is mainly domestic, it is still hard to control the organoleptic and health quality of meats. A project has been undertaken to enhance these small livestock farmers' competitiveness by helping them adapt to new consumer expectations.

In Southeast Asia, many urban consumers are willing to pay more for pigmeat that is healthier and has better nutritional and organoleptic properties. However, the quality challenge is a daunting one in Vietnam and Cambodia, where pigs are still raised on family farms.

These small-scale producers are unaware of how to produce leaner, healthier meat that would be more competitive on world markets: they cling to traditional husbandry techniques, do not practice selective pig breeding and often do not know about dietary supplementation principles.

A project to enhance small livestock producers' capacities

To provide models to help these farmers in the new market environment, the project "**Improving the pig and pigmeat marketing chain to enable small producers to serve consumer needs in Vietnam and Cambodia**" was intended to afford small producers access to high-value-added contracts (improving the health and taste quality of the meat) and higher selling prices (a fairer distribution of profit margins and better incomes for producers). To achieve these objectives, research has been carried out on markets, the pig industry and production conditions on family farms. The subsequently adopted innovative strategies were then adapted to each country's specific problems.

The project was implemented in the provinces of Takeo, in Cambodia,

and Hai Duong in Vietnam, two production areas that supply the large cities of Phnom Penh (Cambodia), Hanoi, Hai Phong and Quang Ninh (Vietnam). The questions were as follows:

- What are the new market conditions? What innovations do they call for?
- How can family farms be encouraged to participate in the new subsectors?
- What support measures and policies are needed?

Some answers were obtained, particularly through the action research approach (especially in Vietnam) and the participatory approach in cooperation with all pig industry stakeholders.

Central to the Effort in Vietnam: Producer cooperatives

In Vietnam, the programme achieved success chiefly through producer cooperatives. These are still powerful mediators, promoting dialogue between small producers and pigmeat distribution networks.

Indeed, the beneficiaries of the project—pig producers—are members of the Federation of Cooperatives (FC) of Nam Sach, which was already in operation a year before project startup; it had extensive field knowledge, as its seven constituent cooperatives had been founded between 2002 and 2005. It had mediated a number of actions before project startup to improve pig quality and enhance producers' capacity, particularly by introducing improved swine breeds or feed supplements. ...



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▲ Pigs are mainly raised on family farms in Vietnam and Cambodia.

FC has been able to establish high-quality production processes through discussions between producers, distributors and advisory bodies. The stages of production (breeding, slaughtering, preparation and distribution) have been standardised and domestic quality management rules implemented to prevent disease outbreaks and monitor food safety.

Throughout this process, the involvement of State agencies (departments of agriculture, rural development or veterinary science), research scientists, meat packers and retailers has been of great assistance. Other pilot projects undertaken by FC include the development of highly sanitary pig farms; the introduction of seals of approval and health certificates; consolidation of trade networks; enhancement of FC members' capacity through training. With the help of the Polytechnic University, the Federation has also sought alternatives to the use of borax as a preservative.

Improving pigmeat quality has helped create jobs within FC, whose products have been well received

by consumers at trade fairs and demonstrations. FC has helped increase producers' incomes in various ways, including through centralized purchasing. Finally, in addition to the veterinary services and vaccination campaigns it runs, it provides disease prevention guidelines for its members.

Implementation of action research in Cambodia

Cambodian farmers have received support from CelAgrid (Centre for Livestock and Agriculture Development), particularly on breeding techniques and locally procured feed (strong market demand). To be eligible for the pilot project activities, producers had to be willing to participate in action research and share their knowledge with other farmers. In the course of the activities the economic efficiency of the proposed techniques, as compared to traditional practices, was demonstrated.

Not only did the farmers involved make their manpower available for

field research, they also attended courses at the Farmer Field School (FFS). The FFS methodology was particularly suited to farm families with little education in that it was participatory and visually based (video projectors). The teaching was both theoretical and practical and based on close interaction between trainers and trainees; technical consultants were on hand to help farmers apply what they learned in the field. Tests administered before and after the course showed how well the concepts taught had been integrated: 46.5% of the small farmers had given more than 50% correct answers during a baseline assessment, while by the end of the project 78.2% could do so.

The courses were designed to meet farmers' stated needs so that they could adapt to market requirements (e.g. improved animal feed).

In order to disseminate these innovative techniques as widely as possible, a field day was organized to which non-participating families, village chiefs and members of municipal councils were invited. The FFS also enhanced producers'

► *Improving pigmeat quality has helped create jobs within Federation of Cooperatives in Nam Sach Province in Vietnam whose products have been well received by consumers at trade fairs and demonstrations.*



self-sufficiency by producing daily bulletins for radio and television broadcasts on the pig market and selling prices in particular.

CelAgrid brought farmers and slaughterhouses together to help obtain better prices. Small farmers, who formerly had access to just two local sales channels (unofficial slaughterhouses within the village and intermediaries outside the village who sold their purchases on to official slaughterhouses), could now sell to many more different buyers. As they found their new partners offered more competitive prices, 25% of them now sell their pigs to new buyers.

A basis for new national policies

In both countries, the project has helped identify the support that producers require and the production problems that arise from market obligations. Farmers have a better understanding of how to market their livestock; they have helped create and consolidate a participatory network in the pig industry; they have succeeded in improving the quality and safety of their food products and are now interacting with State agencies, which, for their part, are now more aware of

small farmers' specific problems and therefore better able to provide them with targeted support.

To implement the pilot activities, an array of skills were required in various areas (science, sociology, economics, institutional, etc.) and many partners had to be mobilised (farmers, farmers' organizations, companies, dealers, slaughterhouses, supermarkets, universities, research institutes, NGOs, public utilities).

An equitable relationship has been established between all industry stakeholders, while family farmers' concerns are being taken more seriously and their incomes have increased, especially through the efforts of farmers' organisations. All of these results are all the more positive—and a priori lasting—in that they have laid the groundwork for new policy proposals. ■

Partnership

Project Leader: Rural Development Center (RUDEC) / Institute of Policy and Strategy for Agriculture and Rural development (IPSARD, Vietnam)

Partners: Centre for Livestock and Agricultural Devt., Univ. Of Tropical Agriculture (Cambodia), CIRAD—Markets and Agriculture Linkages for Cities in Asia (MALICA) and Research Consortium on Risks Associated with Livestock Intensification (PRISE) (France), Heifer International (Cambodia), International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI, Philippines), Lok Farmer Association, Takeo Province (Cambodia), Long Co Company Limited (Vietnam), Nam Sach Animal Production Cooperative, Hai Duong Province, (North Vietnam), Prash Punlear Slaughterhouse (Cambodia), Srah Takoun Farmers' Association, Takeo Province (Cambodia), Women's Union of Nam Sach District, Hai Duong Province (North Vietnam)

Countries involved: Cambodia, Vietnam

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